

## Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Use and Abuse in Vermont

### What is the Goal of the Prevention Unit?

The Department of Health, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program's (ADAP) Prevention Unit seeks to prevent:

- Illegal substance use in Vermont, including underage use of alcohol.
- The abuse of alcohol and other drugs by adults and young people.

The Prevention Unit also partners with other state agencies, including collaboration with the Department's Tobacco Control Program.

### What is Substance Abuse Prevention?

*The promotion of healthy lifestyles and norms that discourage drug use.*

Prevention is achieved through the application of multiple strategies – it is an ongoing process that must relate to each emerging generation.

### What are the ADAP Supported Strategies?

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention suggests that the following strategies, in combination, comprise a comprehensive substance abuse prevention effort. The following are examples of the strategies that are currently supported by ADAP:

- Public Information
- Education
- Substance Free Social and Recreational Opportunities
- Early Intervention
- Community Based Process
- Environmental Approaches

More information about these strategies can be found at [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov).

### Why Is Comprehensive Planning Important?

It takes a combination of actions, sustained over time, to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug use. Prevention strategies are most likely to succeed if they reach both individuals and the environments in which people live and work – family, school and community.

Community-level prevention works best when community members are committed and involved. ADAP's 5-step strategic prevention framework supports communities to plan and take action.

1. Assessment
2. Capacity Building
3. Planning
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation



## SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN VERMONT

### Alcohol Use

- 39% of all students (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) reported drinking alcohol during the past 30 days, down from a high of 53% in 1995.
- Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21.
- Binge drinking increases significantly among young adults compared to teens.
- 32% of 18–20 year-olds binged, compared to nearly 40% of 21-25 year-olds in the past 30 days.
- 23% of all 8th–12th grade students binged on alcohol (had 5 or more drinks within a couple of hours) during the past 30 days.

### Marijuana Use

- Overall, 21% of students used marijuana during the past 30 days, down from 32% in 1997.
- More older students use marijuana than younger students – 34% of 12th grade students used marijuana, compared to 8% of 8th grade students.
- 22% of students have ridden with someone who was using marijuana.
- 41% of 18-25 year-olds used marijuana in the past year.

### Sources

Vermont Department of Health  
National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NSDUH)

### What Does the Prevention Unit Do?

The Prevention Unit oversees substance abuse prevention policy and program development, grants and coordination with other state agencies and service providers. Prevention Unit programs and services include:

#### Substance Abuse Prevention Consultant System

A network of 10 regional Substance Abuse Prevention Consultants (PC's) provide: information; training; assistance with program planning; consultation; and community organization services to communities. The goal of the program is to increase local capacity to carry out substance abuse initiatives.

#### Strategic Prevention Framework

The Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) is a five-year US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant.

Approximately 65 partners worked with the Department of Health to identify these Strategic Prevention Framework priorities:

- Reduce underage drinking
- Reduce high-risk drinking by Vermonters under 25
- Reduce marijuana use by Vermonters under 25

The SPF SIG will support community grants, public information efforts, workforce development and evaluation activities aimed at these priorities. Twenty-three Vermont communities have recently been awarded SPF SIG grants.

### New Directions Coalition Program

Prevention is most likely to succeed if multiple actions are employed and sustained over time. The New Directions Coalition Grant Program funds local coalitions to prevent and reduce substance use among 12 to 17 year-olds. Coalitions educate the community, increase community involvement in local substance abuse prevention initiatives, and implement prevention programs that have been proven effective. New Directions trainings and networking events are open to **any** community coalition involved in reducing or preventing substance abuse.

#### Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Program

The purpose of the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Program (EUDL) is to encourage communities to identify and enforce laws, policies and sanctions, which help reduce underage drinking and improve public safety. EUDL supports compliance checks, training for local officers and public information efforts. Thirteen regional Stop Teen Alcohol Risk Teams (START) also receive community grants to enhance enforcement and community education.

#### Project Rocking Horse

##### Circle of Support Groups Grants

This educational support group serves low-income pregnant or parenting women who are at risk for substance abuse or experiencing the effects of a partner's substance abuse. It is designed to provide knowledge, build skills and offer a safe and caring interpersonal climate in which to discuss needs, problems and issues. Participant outcomes include increased perception of risk from alcohol and illegal drugs for women's health, pregnancy and the family system. Additional outcomes include increased perception of coping, availability of support and improved parenting.

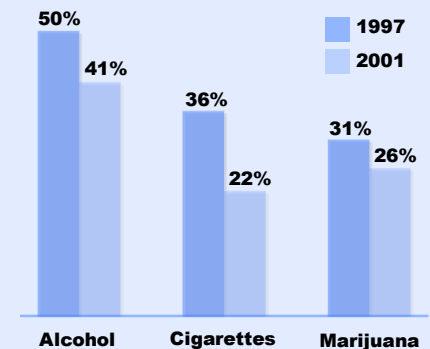
### NEW DIRECTIONS IMPACTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

From 1999 to 2001, New Directions Communities collectively achieved greater reductions in rates of substance use than the remainder of the state. Reductions were significant for past 30-day use of marijuana and cigarettes and lifetime use of marijuana and cigarettes.

The figure below shows changes in the prevalence of past month use of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana from 1997 to 2001 among Vermont students in grades 8 through 12.

From 2001 to 2003 New Directions communities saw a 15 percent drop in tobacco use and an 8 percent drop in recent alcohol use (2003 YRBS).

#### Reductions in 30-Day Prevalence Among 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Graders in New Directions



*Encouraging Findings Regarding Changes in Student Substance Use: An Outcome Evaluation of New Directions Based on the YRBS by Dr. Robert Flewelling*